

Christmas Traditions in France

Les Traditions de Noel en France

Le 4 DECEMBRE : le blé de la sainte barbe



En Provence, Noël commence le 4 décembre à la Sainte Barbara. Ce jour-là, vous commencez par choisir trois soucoupes ou petites assiettes. Couvrez le fond de chacune d'entre elle par du coton humide, vous dispersez du blé de la Sainte Barbe ou des lentilles dedans. Après un arrosage journalier, elles devraient germer avant Noël. Une bonne germination indique une bonne récolte pour l'année qui vient. Si vous les arrosez trop, elles vont pourrir, et ce sera une mauvaise récolte pour l'année suivante.

Ce blé germé est décoré avec des rubans attachés autour des pousses, et **les soucoupes seront mises sur la table pendant le grand souper.** Ensuite, les rubans sont enlevés et les soucoupes sont placées dans la crèche, pour représenter des champs. Vous continuez de les arroser jusqu'à la dernière journée calendales, le 2 Février.

Un proverbe bien connu dans notre région

Blé de la Sainte Barbe bien germé est symbole de prospérité pour la prochaine année."

4th DECEMBER Saint Barbara's Wheat :

In Provence, Christmas begins on 4th December with the Saint Barbara's Day. This day, you start by choosing three pretty saucers or small plates. After covering the bottom of each one with damp cotton, you have to scatter Saint Barbara's wheat, (or some lentils). With daily waterings, they should germinate before Christmas Eve. A good germination indicates a good harvest the following year. If you over water them, they will rot, which symbolizes a poor harvest.

This sprouted wheat is decorated with ribbons tied around the shoots, and **the saucers will be put on the table during the Great Supper.** Afterwards, the ribbons are removed and the saucers are placed in the nativity scene, to represent fields. You continue watering them until the final day of Calendale, on 2nd February.

A well known proverb in our region :

Well-germinated Saint Barbara's wheat is symbol of prosperity for the next year.

LA CRÈCHE

Quelques jours avant Noël, la famille met en place **une crèche**, sur une petite plate-forme dans un coin du salon. Certaines familles ont aussi décoré un arbre de Noël avec des étoiles colorées, des lumières et des guirlandes, mais la crèche reste importante.



La tradition en Provence, dans le sud de la France, est d'inclure, avec **la Sainte Famille**, les Rois Mages, les bergers, et les animaux, délicieux petits personnages de la vie du village vêtus de costumes à l'ancienne. Ces personnages pourraient inclure un maire de village, un paysan, un gitan, un garçon de batteur, et d'autres personnages hauts en couleurs ...

Pour compléter la crèche élaborée dans leur maison, les enfants apportent de **la mousse, des pierres et des branches de conifères** pour la touche finale.

THE NATIVITY SCENE

A few days before Christmas, the family sets up a **nativity scene**, called a crèche, on a little platform in a corner of the living room. Some families also decorate a Christmas tree with colorful stars, lights, and tinsel, but the crèche remains important.

The tradition in Provence, in the south of France, is to include, along with the **Holy Family**, the Three Kings, the shepherds, and the animals, delightful little figures from village life dressed in old-fashioned costumes. These figures might include a village mayor, a peasant, a gypsy, a drummer boy, and other colorful characters...



To complete the elaborate creche in their home, children bring **moss, stones, and evergreen branches** for the finishing touches.

LA VEILLEE DE NOEL / 24TH DECEMBER : CHRISTMAS EVE

Noël est le moment le plus spécial dans la célébration du Noël à la française. Les cloches des églises sonnent et les voix chantent des **chants traditionnels français**, appelé **chants de Noël**. Toute la famille fait le jeun le jour de Noël, puis tout le monde même les plus jeunes enfants va à la messe de minuit. Les églises et les cathédrales sont magnifiquement éclairées, et la plupart affiche une belle crèche antique. Par la suite, la famille retourne à la maison pour une fête nocturne que l'on appelle **le réveillon**. Le menu est différent dans les différentes régions de France.

Christmas Eve is the most special time in the French celebration of Christmas. Church bells ring and voices sing **French carols**, called **chants de Noël**. The family fasts all day, then everyone but the youngest children goes to midnight mass. The churches and cathedrals are beautifully lit, and most display a lovely antique crèche. Afterward, the family returns home to a nighttime feast that is called **le réveillon**. The menu is different in the various regions of France.



LE GROS SOUPER /THE GREAT SUPPER

Il est un fête provençal typique de Noël. Le 24 Décembre, avant la messe de minuit, ce repas est servi sur trois nappes blanches de taille décroissante, avec trois chandeliers et trois soucoupes de blé germé de la Sainte-Barbe.

It is a typical Provençal Christmas feast. On the 24th of December, before midnight mass, this meal is served on three white tablecloths of decreasing size, with three candleholders and three saucers of Sainte-Barbe's sprouted wheat.

LES TREIZE DESSERTS / THE 13 DESSERTS

Ce sont principalement des produits régionaux: fruits (pommes, poires), les fruits secs (dattes, figues), noix (noix, noisettes, amandes), pâte de coing, le nougat (blanc ou noir), des bonbons enveloppés, et le pain d'huile d'olive

They are mainly regional products: fruit (apple, pears), dried fruit (dates, figs), nuts (walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds), quince paste, nougat (white or black), wrapped candies, and olive oil bread

LA BÛCHE DE NOËL / THE YULE LOG

La bûche de Noël est un vrai gros morceau de bois, traditionnellement à partir d'un arbre fruitier comme un olivier ou un cerisier. En Provence, c'est au cœur d'une autre tradition : *lou Cacho-fio* ", mis le feu" en provençal. La veille de Noël, juste avant le grand festin, le plus jeune membre le plus âgé de la famille sont allés chercher une grosse bûche et l'ont porter autour de la table trois fois.



The true Yule log is a big piece of wood, traditionally from a fruit tree like an olive or cherry tree. In Provence, it's at the heart of another tradition: *lou cacho-fiò*, "set on fire" in Provençal. On Christmas Eve, right before the Great Supper, the oldest and youngest member of the family go and get a big log and carry it around the table three times.

Maintenant, vous pouvez profiter de notre traditionnelle buche de Noël, riche en beurre rempli de gâteau roulé et lissé pour ressembler à une bûche! (Voir recette page suivante)

Now you can enjoy our traditional **buche de Noel**, a rich buttercream-filled cake shaped and frosted to look like a Yule log !! (see recipe next page)

And **Merry Christmas ! Joyeux Noël ! Billy ,**

Thibault et Alicia

YULE LOG / LA BUCHE DE NOËL

For the Sponge cake

1/4 cup (50 grams) plus 2 tablespoons (28 grams) granulated white sugar

6 large eggs, separated

1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

4 ounces (112 grams) bittersweet or semisweet chocolate

3/4 teaspoon cream

For the Chocolate Whipped Cream

1 cup (240 ml) heavy whipping cream (contains 35-40% butterfat)

1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

3 tablespoon (40 grams) granulated white sugar 1 1/2 tablespoons cocoa powder



Sponge cake

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (180 degrees C) and place the oven rack in the center of the oven. Butter, or spray with a non stick vegetable spray, a 17 x 12 inch (43x30 cm) baking pan. Line the pan with parchment paper and then butter and flour the parchment paper.

While the eggs are still cold, separate the eggs, placing the whites in one bowl and the yolks in another. Cover and bring to room temperature before using (about 30 minutes). Meanwhile melt the chocolate in a heatproof bowl placed over a saucepan of simmering water. Remove from heat and cool.

In the bowl of your electric mixer place the egg yolks and 1/4 cup of sugar and beat until light and fluffy (about five minutes). Beat in the vanilla extract. Scrape down sides of bowl. Add the melted chocolate and beat only to combine.

In a clean mixing bowl, beat the egg whites until foamy. Add the cream and beat at medium-high speed until soft peaks form. Gradually beat in the remaining 2 tablespoons sugar until stiff peaks form.

Gently add a small amount of the egg whites into the egg yolk mixture using a rubber spatula or whisk. Add in the remaining whites just until incorporated. Don't over mix or the batter will deflate. Spread the batter evenly into the prepared pan. Bake until the cake is puffed, has lost its shine, and springs back when gently pressed, about 15 - 17 minutes. Remove from oven and place on wire rack to cool. Cover the cake with a clean, slightly damp towel.

Chocolate Whipped Cream

In a large mixing bowl place the whipping cream, vanilla extract, sugar, and cocoa powder and stir to combine. Cover and chill the bowl and beaters in the refrigerator for at least one hour so the cocoa powder has time to dissolve. Beat the mixture until stiff peaks form.

Rolling

Once the cake has cooled, spread with the cream (set 2 tablespoons aside) and then gently roll the cake, peeling off the parchment paper as you roll (the cake may crack). Trim one end of the cake at an angle and set it aside. Then place the cake, seam side down, on your serving platter. Take the slice of reserved cake and, using the reserved whipped cream, attach it to the side of the cake. Cover and chill until serving time. Just before serving remove cake from fridge, dust with confectioner sugar and decorate with meringue mushrooms.

L'Épiphanie en France

The Epiphany takes place on **6 January** and celebrates the date of the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus. On this day the three Wise Men arrived from the East, guided by the Star of Bethlehem, bearing gifts for the divine infant.



In France we also celebrate the Epiphany by eating the “**galette des rois**” (Kings’ cake) ceremoniously!

Tradition has it that the youngest member of the family goes under the table to distribute the slices to the different people sitting around the table. The person who finds the lucky charm in the slice of ‘*galette*’ becomes the **king** (or **queen**) of the day and must choose his/her companion.

Lucky charms we usually hide inside the “galette”



*"You can buy some "Galette des Rois" in every "Boulangerie Patisserie "(bakery) during the first weeks of January , but what about trying our simple and cheap recipe and **baking your own "galette"** at home ?"*

Shopping list

puff pastry

2 round sheets of puff pastry

almond mixture

2 eggs

100g caster sugar

75g unsalted butter

150/200g ground almonds

1/4 tsp vanilla or almond extract

Glaze

1 egg yolk

50g icing sugar

Inside

1 lucky charm



Preparation

Place one sheet of puff pastry on a greased baking sheet.

•Prepare the **almond mixture**: soften the butter and add the sugar. Beat strongly to obtain a smooth texture. Add the ground almonds, then the 2 eggs and the vanilla extract.

•**Place the almond mixture in the centre of the round-shaped pastry** and spread it evenly up to 2cm away from the edge. Add the lucky charm near the edge (if you add it near the centre, it might be easily discovered when cutting the cake!).

•**Cover the base with the second round-shaped pastry** and make sure the two pastry sheets are stuck down together, You may use a little water to join the two sheets along the edges.

•**Make an egg wash with the egg yolk and a little water** and using a pastry brush, brush all over the top.

•**With a knife, carefully trace decorative shapes**. Make sure you don't press too hard in order to avoid piercing the pastry.

Cook in a pre-heated oven at 170 degrees C for about 30 minutes.

•**Mix the icing sugar** with some water to make a liquid sugar syrup and spread all over the top of the galette.

•Cook the galette for a further 5 minutes at 220 degrees C to enable the sugar to cook slightly and create a shiny effect.

•Eat the cake **lukewarm and enjoy the party!**



On January the sixth , we
shared a home baked
"galette" with the teachers of
Louis Giraud High school

(CARPENTRAS)

